

COULD YOU BE THE 'OTHER BROTHER'? or THE PRODIGAL WHO STAYED HOME

TEXT: Luke 15:24-32

THESIS: To compare & contrast sins of the flesh w/sins of the spirit.

INTRO.: A. There are two brothers who are the focus of Jesus' parable here. One we have labeled the Prodigal ("exceedingly wasteful"), because he had demanded his inheritance, left home, squandered his life & money & ended up in the hog pen. The story is about his restoration by his father & the joy of his return.

B. The *other brother* resents how the father treated the Prodigal Son & reveals he is just as "wasteful" as his brother in a different way. You could not tell by observation of the elder brother's problems. He was in the right place, doing the right things. He could have made the "Who's Who" list today whereas his brother would have been on the "Who's He" register. While the younger brother was in the *far country*, the other brother was working in his *father's fields*. The prodigal's sins were *obvious*, the other brother's sins were *invisible*. The prodigal's sins were *external*, the other brother's sins were *internal*. The prodigal's sins were *sins of the flesh*, the other brother's sins were *sins of the spirit*. The prodigal was *full of sin* & repented; his brother was *full of self* & needed to repent. The unsettling question I want to ask today is "**COULD YOU BE THE 'OTHER BROTHER'?**" Are YOU "**THE PRODIGAL WHO STAYED HOME?**"

ILLUS.: When David sinned in the flesh w/Bathsheba 4 people died; when he sinned in the spirit in numbering the people 70,000 people died!!!!

TRANS: This parable is directed at the Pharisees & their hypocrisy. He wants them to see that sins of the spirit are just as deadly as sins of the flesh & that hypocrisy is as sinful as fleshly indulgence! We often magnify other's sins & minimize our own.

Someone said "*The sins of the flesh are like headlights in oncoming traffic - they seem to be more glaring than our own!*"

I. UNRIGHTEOUS ANGER: v.28 (THE PROBLEM OF BITTERNESS)

A. Proper Anger:

1. He was angry at his brother's wicked behavior. (v.30a - an exaggeration?)
2. He was angry at his brother's disrespect for his father.

ILLUS.: Anger has its proper place. Adam & Eve should have gotten angry at the serpents lies & picked up stones to kill him! It is right to be angry at the acceptance of Satan's lies today which portrays immorality as acceptable.

B. Improper Anger:

1. He was angry at his father's treatment of his brother (grace).
2. He was angry at his father's treatment of himself (selfishness - the root of all unrighteous anger - he had a case of "ingrown eyeballs" i.e., self-pity).

ILLUS.: For every unrighteous son who goes astray, there are 100 self-righteous sons who stay at home. The "other brothers" love to hear preaching directed at Prodigals. The answer to the self-problem is not expression or suppression but crucifixion!

II. UNFOUNDED JEALOUSY: v.29,30 (THE PROBLEM OF SELFISHNESS)

- A. He Justified Himself (& cut off his nose to spite his face! v.28)
- B. He Judged His Brother (referred to him as "thy son" instead of "my brother")
- C. He Jeered His Father (he begrudged his brother the kindness of his father)

ILLUS.: Jealousy blinded him to seeing that he was losing two of the greatest relationships in life, a brother & a father! Jealousy & selfishness blinds us.

III. UNGRATEFUL HEART: v.31,32 (THE PROBLEM OF UNTHANKFULNESS)

ILLUS.: Only one of the ten lepers Jesus healed came back to thank Him. What happened to the other nine? One man said: "They joined a Baptist Church!"

A. A Skewered Perspective:

1. The other brother lost sight of the daily benefits he enjoyed at his father's house & table while his brother was in the pig pen!

QUOTE: "A miracle is a much more brilliant & imposing thing than an ordinary gift; but one miracle is not such evidence of fatherly love as we have in an innumerable series of daily & hourly blessings. A greater gift than the manna in the wilderness were the annual harvests which fed many generations of the people of God."

B. A Serious Problem:

1. We need to realize that everything this side of hell is mercy!
2. We shouldn't thank God because everything is good, but because He is good

IV. UNLOVING DISPOSITION: v.30 (THE PROBLEM OF TUNNEL VISION)

A. A Harsh Attitude Towards Prodigals:

1. He magnifies his brother's sins instead of rejoicing over his repentance.
2. All former prodigals get teary-eyed whenever they see another prodigal coming home!

ILLUS.: Other brother types experience no joy in seeing drug addicts, prostitutes, the poor & uneducated or bus kids come to Christ. Instead of congratulating them, they criticize: "She's probably an unwed mother..." "He's still got an earring in his ear..." "He got his clothes at the Salvation Army shelter..."

Other brother types prefers the company of those just like him - same background, same race, same income level, same hobbies, etc. In fact, they will probably search for another church if the "wrong class" of people join "their church."

V. UNBROKEN SPIRIT: (THE PROBLEM OF PRIDE)

ILLUS.: The Prodigal Son probably represents the Gentiles & sins of the flesh, whereas the Other Brother represents the Jewish people, stiff-necked, puffed up & unbroken! The story ends w/the other brother still full of himself & pride & unbroken.

One former member here got upset over a note I had written to her. She got mad. I apologized. She kept the note & found other things to get mad over. Years went by. I went to the house about a problem. She dug up that ancient, crumpled note that started it all. While I was home sleeping, she was lying awake at night, full of anger. She finally left the church after she got her husband angry too. Her pride wouldn't let her let it go. It ate her up & ruined the home & her children.

The heart of the problem is a problem of the heart.

CONCL.: There are 3 sons in the parable: the repentant Prodigal, the bitter other brother and the Savior Who gave us the parable, the Son of God. When the Prodigal returned home the father rushed out to meet & forgive him. When the other brother refused to join the celebration the father went out to entreat him. He will do whatever it takes for you too!

"COULD YOU BE THE 'OTHER BROTHER'?" THE PRODIGAL WHO STAYED HOME?

Subtle sins of the spirit are more deadly & dangerous than sins of the flesh. Jesus said it would be more tolerable for the Sodomites & their fleshly sins than the sins of the self-righteous, religious people at Capernaum.